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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir and Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The constituent organizations of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women of Latin America and the Caribbean welcome the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women is considering, at its fifty-ninth session, the progress made and the obstacles and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and that it is promoting reflection and analysis to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and rights of women and girls. Furthermore, that will contribute to the establishment of Sustainable Development Goals based on human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls, which will be approved in 2015 and will guide policies towards 2030.

Sustainable development is not possible unless gender equality and the rights of women and girls are guaranteed. Therefore, an assessment of the difficulties and obstacles facing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is vital in helping to avoid errors when finalizing the goals and their indicators in the post-2015 process.

We note with concern how in Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the regions of the world where there have been major advances in women's equality and rights, those advances have been largely at the legislative level and, in many countries, have not been translated into an improvement in living conditions for women and girls, especially the most vulnerable such as indigenous women, women of African descent, migrants, refugees, those living with HIV, disabled women and those with particular sexual orientations and identities.

Much of the progress that has been achieved in Latin America and the Caribbean is due to the pressure and activism of the various women's and feminist organizations that already existed before Beijing and that were working for gender equality. Following Beijing, they have redoubled their efforts and made an irrefutable contribution to progress in the region.

Sadly, Latin America and the Caribbean is the most unequal region in the world. While there has been a reduction in poverty, inequality between the highest and lowest income quintiles has grown, affecting mostly women and young people. Therefore, development without a human rights framework guaranteeing a more equal distribution of resources and productive income so that everyone may enjoy the minimum levels essential for a dignified life is not real development. That requires a different development model and a different use of resources and territory, as well as tax changes to ensure a more just and egalitarian distribution.

Social security and its traditional redistribution component exclude those working in the informal sector, a group growing in size in our countries and in which women predominate. New working arrangements, the development and widespread use of new technology, together with precarious forms of employment that are now hindering the inclusion of more women and young people in the formal work sector, demand a review of models of solidarity in and between countries, which regrettably have not yet been developed.

In this context, respect for reproductive health and rights is essential. Morbidity and mortality associated with pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium, complications resulting from unsafe abortions and infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases that affect a large percentage of vulnerable women

across the world are obstacles to development that cast a shadow over any progress made. Added to that is the death and suffering of so many women and girls who are today subjected to violence solely on account of their gender. Such violence is resulting much more frequently in femicide and occasions not only the senseless loss of young women in their productive and reproductive prime, but also the deterioration and suffering of their families, especially their children. Violence against women is a human rights violation that is on the increase in the region and, although there exist laws and regulations in many countries in the region, impunity, difficulties in accessing justice for women who experience violence and a lack of preventive action are the norm in our countries.

Violence against women and girls is not only a weapon of war during occupation and armed conflicts, it is also an infringement of fundamental human rights of women such as the rights to life, to bodily integrity, to health and to freedom from torture and discrimination.

The women and girls of Latin America and the Caribbean and women and girls throughout the world cannot wait another 20 years!

On behalf of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women of Latin America and the Caribbean:

- Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, Argentina
- Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Mexico
- Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú, Peru

The following organizations comprise the NGO Committee on the Status of Women of Latin America and the Caribbean: Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, Argentina; Grassroots Organisations Operating Together in Sisterhood; Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Mexico; Latin American Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights; Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women; Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres; Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú, Peru; Colectiva Mujer y Salud, Dominican Republic.